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Reagan said to OK anti-Kadafi plan

From Wire Reports

WASHINGTON — President Reagan has approved a covert plan aimed at weakening the regime of Libyan leader Col. Muammar el Kadafi, according to congressional sources and administration officials.

An administration official said yesterday that the disclosure of the plan would not necessarily derail it.

"We went ahead with the world's most open covert operation against Nicaragua," the official said. "I would not assume that the opponents of this can kill it with leaks."

The official said disclosure was damaging, but added, "Kadafi probably already assumes we're doing this."

The CIA plan was disclosed in yesterday's editions of *The Washington Post*. White House spokesman Bill Hart, who at first had refused to comment on the report, said yesterday that the president had ordered a probe "in an effort to determine who is responsible for [the] disclosure and to take appropriate action."

Mr. Hart refused to say what appropriate action might entail or whether the investigation would include the use of lie-detector tests on people with access to the classified documents.

Nor would he directly confirm the existence or credibility of the documents quoted by the *Post*.

Mr. Reagan, returning to the White House from a weekend at the Camp David presidential retreat, ignored reporters' shouted questions about the report.

"We do not comment on alleged intelligence activity or intelligence activities," Mr. Hart told reporters, reading from a statement. "In general, the president is very concerned over the unauthorized disclosure of intelligence and classified information.

"While in no way attributing any credence to the specific allegations and conclusions drawn in the *Washington Post* article, the president is ordering an investigation of the disclosure of the U.S. intelligence documents cited in this news report in an effort to determine who is responsible for such disclosure and to take appropriate action."

The report quoted unidentified government sources as saying Mr. Reagan authorized the Central Intelligence Agency to support covert operations to undermine the Kadafi regime.

Both Mr. Reagan and former President Jimmy Carter have called Colonel Kadafi an international terrorist.

The *Post* report said the CIA's plan involved assisting one or more of Libya's neighbors in North Africa and the Middle East that oppose Kadafi.

Both the chairman and vice chairman of the Senate intelligence committee, Dave Durenberger, R-Minn., and Patrick J. Leahy, D-Vt., wrote Mr. Reagan expressing their opposition to the plan, the *Post* said.

According to the report, the object of the plan is to disrupt and frustrate Kadafi's subversive and terrorist plans and perhaps to lure him into some foreign adventure or terrorist exploit.

That could provide an opportunity for his opponents in the Libyan military to seize power or for a neighboring country such as Algeria or Egypt to strike back at the Libyan leader, who has survived several coup attempts and assassination plots.

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